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## WILL AND REASON.

IT has always been, I think, the practice in civilised society to speak of reason or good sense as in some way influencing action. And of course it must do so, if, as we suppose, it forms the radical distinction between man and the lower animals. "Be reasonable," we say, in reference to action no less than to speculation. "Wisdom and blood," says Shakespeare, "combating in so tender a body, we have ten proofs to one that blood hath the victory." Blood here means passion. How does wisdom or knowledge combat passion? I do not say that wisdom and knowledge mean the same thing, but if they do not, we should like to know the difference between them.

In this prevalent notion of the conflict between reason and desire, it may be observed that reason is, as a rule, supposed to be negative or prohibitive. "Be reasonable" generally means "give up something you want very much." According to one account, the inward monitor of Socrates was always negative, and throughout moral philosophy, and especially throughout moralising philosophy, which is not quite the same thing, you find the point of view that reason conflicts with desire, and has in fact for its function very much to prevent you doing or caring about whatever you very particularly want to do or incline to care about. This is what gives rise to the state of things satirised in the old saying "Any young man would rather face an imputation on his moral character than an imputation on his horsemanship." If moral character means a sort of detachment from everything, this feeling is both natural and justifiable. The popular interpretation of Aristotle leans in the direction of this

idea about reason, in so far as the conception of the reason seems to be connected with common-place notions about the evils of excess, strongly represented in Greek proverbial philosophy. It was easy to add to these ideas the conception of the evils of defect, which is little more than a verbal refinement on the other. These quantitative expressions have not much meaning in morality. Unquestionably, I think, the popular aspect of the Aristotelian doctrine is an idea that you ought not to throw yourself very deeply into anything. Reason is, in short, according to these moralistic conceptions, though not according to Aristotle's fundamental view, a sort of check upon desire and little more.

This negative character of reason will, I hope, explain itself away as we proceed. The primary point on which I want to insist is not why reason is thus treated as negative, but how it comes that reason can be supposed to conflict with or control desire at all. I speak for the present of Desire, not of Will, because the meaning of desire is clearer ; whereas it is a doubt, until we have explained the nature of active reason, what Will is, and whether it is distinguishable from desire.

Now, on the other hand, there is a sentence of Aristotle "Intelligence as such moves nothing," and this seems to come home to us quite as naturally as the idea that reason controls action. All plain or unambiguous instances of reason or reasoning or intelligence, seem to deal with discovery of fact, couched in a form which is capable of truth and falsehood. For our purpose we may treat it as elaborate perception, whether direct or assisted through inference, such as calculation. Calculation is the old meaning of reasoning, both in Greek and Latin.

How do we get across from perception or calculation to anything that can interfere with desire?

Of course there is a meeting-point in the idea that attends desire. Human desire, at least, is not blind. It is desire of something, which is before the mind as an idea ; and in the case of desire which issues in action this something must be mentally specified in respect of the particular means needed to bring it about. And also, the end or purpose which is desired for its own sake, is, in the

connection of cause and effect, itself *de facto* a means to other results *ad infinitum*, more or less of which are foreseen by the person who acts. Thus the act, as fully presented to the mind in idea, is a complication of external circumstances, which are ideally distinguished, supposing the act to be reflected on, as means, realisation of the purpose, and foreseen consequences both of the means and of the realisation of the purpose.

It is, I think, all-important to remember, that these distinctions are distinctions of relation to the acting subject, drawn very lightly by the acting subject on the shifting surface of a complicated set of results presented in idea, and are not at all complete distinctions, and lend themselves very readily to self-deception. We shall see the importance of this remark directly.

In the meantime, here we have one way in which reasonings about fact do help to modify our actions. If we know distinctly what we desire, say, a week's holiday, then it is reasoning about matters of fact that will tell us what we must do to get it, and, in part, what the results will be both of our getting it and of what we do to get it. Now for philosophical purposes we need not consider the foreseen consequences separately. They must rank, morally, as means. That is to say, they are something which you have to take into the bargain in order to get what you want. They come in with all the other circumstances in determining whether you like the action or not.

Now is *this* connection between action and reason what we have in mind when we say that a person ought to act reasonably, or that reason combats desire? Do we understand by acting reasonably, that assuming some one part of the imagined circumstances to represent the purpose, the agent has got all the means to it, and the foreseen consequences of it, and the interdependence of the parts of the purpose itself, set out in a connection which is truly perceived or scientifically inferred?

We do sometimes appear to mean this. We say: it is unreasonable to ask me to be at the station at nine when the train does not start till ten. It is unreasonable, you may say, on the ground that the means demanded of me are not, scientifically speaking, neces-

sary to the end agreed upon. Still more we should pronounce it unreasonable to adopt any means which actually defeats your purpose; which could only happen, one would think, either from moral self-deception, or in complicated matters where the means are disputable. This second case does not matter to us; the first carries us a little further, because it suggests that what you call the means may really contain your purpose, or one of your purposes, perhaps inconsistent with another. The hackneyed example of selfish charity is as good a case of this unreasonableness as can be found. The gift, which is professed to be merely a means to the good of another, is, under all the conditions, a means contrary to that good, and is given because it gratifies an impulse of the donor. It might seem, in this case again, a fair explanation to pronounce such conduct unreasonable merely because the means adopted are scientifically speaking inconsistent with the end proposed. We might bear in mind, however, that we seem to have detected here a probable conflict of ends, not merely of means to an end.

Admitting, then, for the moment, that we hold conduct to be unreasonable if the perception, implied in it, of the relation between means, ends, and consequences is flagrantly false, do we admit conduct to be reasonable *simply* because the intellectual perception in question is clear and true? Taking truth in its ordinary sense, as truth of simple fact, we must deny this. I may know perfectly well that so much wine will make me drunk, and may drink it with that object and with that result, and yet no one will pronounce this a reasonable action, though my judgment of facts and results was as true and reasonable as could be. It may be, however, that in a larger sense true judgment involves reasonable action.

Thus it does not seem that truth of perception or correctness of calculation as to the connection of the circumstances which are presented in the idea of an act are sufficient to make the act reasonable, although serious blunders in the perception or calculation seem to make the act which implies them unreasonable. I even doubt whether the last clause was rightly stated. I was obliged to say *flagrant* errors, *serious* blunders. For it seems doubtful whether a purely intellectual error, or blunder of perception, does make an

act "unreasonable," which owing to such a blunder misses its mark. I incline to think that the reason why we are forced, in such cases as I have instanced, to lay stress on the *flagrancy* of the blunder, is that it makes us suspect self-deception or moral neglect on the part of the agent, makes us suspect, in other words, that the inconsistency between means and ends was not owing to mere intellectual misjudgment, but was adopted with open or partially open eyes. I do not think that I *should* call my friend unreasonable for wanting to meet at the station an hour before the departure of the train, if he could show me *bona fide* grounds which made him imagine that it was necessary to arrive so early. I might in that case think him mistaken, but should not venture to call him unreasonable, unless his mistake seemed so obvious that I thought it was committed on purpose, that is, was not an intellectual mistake at all. When I call him unreasonable, perhaps I really suspect he is making a claim on my time to meet some private convenience of his own—to avoid a crowd or to make sure of some particular carriage, which I do not care about—and therefore perhaps it may after all be his *purpose* that I think unreasonable.

But there is one great doctrine of reasonableness which does reduce it to a question of means and ends, and that is, the doctrine that everything else is a means to pleasure, whether that of the agent or that of all sentient beings. I do not want to discuss Hedonism psychologically just now, I only want to use it as an illustration of one way in which intelligence may be alleged to control action. The ultimate theory would then be that this uniform purpose, pleasure, is a natural or obvious, or, so to speak, a *given* purpose; and that all definite action is or has been prescribed by the intelligence dealing with matter of fact, as a means to the realisation of this given purpose.

Then reasonable action would mean what our reasoning and perceptive powers, dealing with matters of fact, pronounce to make for pleasure, and unreasonable action would be all that does not. Here, though I wish to avoid hackneyed criticism, I must note that there is a certain difficulty in getting across from the idea of one's own pleasure to that of other people's pleasure as a natural pur-

pose, and sometimes we find the contention that any person's pleasure is a *reasonable purpose* to any person, which, like several indications before, takes us out of the connection between reason and the mere calculation of means to an end.

Apart from this, I have, for our object, only to refer back to the suspicion with which we regarded these distinctions between means, ends, and consequences, in the presented idea of an action. The burden of proof lies on those who limit the aspects in and for which activities or results can be or ought to be desired. If we say that the whole complex of our moral life is a means to a partial though necessary incident in it, it seems to me that we are putting the cart before the horse. If you could really say "moral life is the means, and pleasure is the end" then it would follow that, should calculation tell you that moral life was not the most effectual means, you would not prefer it. Now this old argument may be pronounced unfair on the ground that it puts an impossible case; just like the counter-question which is asked by the opposite side, "If morality led only to increased pain, would you prefer it then?" Still, if these two questions together bring out the fact that pleasure is an incident of a whole complex of functions and activities which we cannot suppose to be separated from it, we do get this much result, that there is no firm ground for distinguishing part of the complex as the end from the rest as the means. And it seems clear, also, that we differentiate pleasures *in kind* according to the activities which they accompany, just as we have constantly found that the so-called means differentiates and qualifies the so-called purpose.

Thus I do not think that it is possible to represent the reasonableness of action as consisting in its guidance by right calculation of the means to an end, not even to the alleged simple and universal end of pleasure. At the same time, this view has one essential element of truth, that is the recognition that a positive impulse or claim can only be combated or defeated by a positive impulse or claim. The view goes so far indeed as to say that one form of a general impulse can only be combated by another form of that same impulse through the discrepancy of the alternative means to its at-

tainment. However this may be, so much does seem clear, viz. that reasonableness cannot be, as popular language tends to make it, something purely negative and prohibitive. Its negative aspect must be secondary, and according to the suggestions furnished by the notions we have been examining, must arise out of a discrepancy between two sets of means to the same acknowledged or accepted end. This I think is solid ground, so far that we are bound to deduce the negative side of reasonableness from a positive nature, whether a general relation to one and the same purpose, or relations to different purposes. We have learnt, on the other hand, to distrust the absolute distinction between means and end.

2. Now I turn for a moment to what I may describe as *maxims* of reasonableness. I will not call them "A priori principles," because such an expression raises a question about the nature of experience which does not concern the point before us. But I do treat them as characteristic of a view which explains reasonableness rather by rules than by purposes; and it seems to follow from this that the rule must be alleged to be self-evident, because if they were derivative, they would most naturally be derivative from purposes. But in the history of speculation of course the same principle may be recommended at one time as analogous to an axiom of the reasoning power, and at another time as involved in the purposes which are recognised as good. Even the same writer may combine both views.

Now if such principles are supported as constituting the reasonableness of action, either because connected with the predominance of the speculative intelligence, or because of an analogy between such principles and any axioms acceptable to the speculative intelligence, I believe that this support of them is due to a sheer confusion.

I take two only, as illustrations, one of each type I have mentioned.

Plato, it seems to me, constantly fails to distinguish between the reasonableness of conduct, and the reasonableness of abstract reasoning, that is, of the scientific intellect. To the moral philosopher, scientific or theoretical interest and activity are one interest



and activity among others ; and the reasonableness of activity is not insured by pursuing an activity of reasonableness. It *may* be quite unreasonable, in the moral sense, to pursue abstract reasoning as a vocation in life. When we say that in every man the reason should be uppermost, we do not mean that every man should devote himself to intellectual pursuits. Plato knows this, as, in a sense, he knows everything ; but he uses all arguments for his purpose, and among others I think he allows it to be supposed that occupation with intellectual matter is in a moral sense a predominance of the reason. I may instance his attempt to prove that intellectual pleasures are the pleasantest, more especially with reference to his aim in making the attempt, which is, I suppose, to recommend intellectual occupation as pre-eminently reasonable in the moral sense. To this I say No ; if and in as far as the inference is meant to rest upon an identification of scientific with moral reasonableness, I think it a sheer confusion. It is like saying that because a doctor has to do with the promotion of health, therefore it is a healthy profession to be a doctor. But Plato's argument shows how strongly this idea appealed to him, because he even recommends intellectual pleasures on the score of their sheer pleasantness, implying not only that intellectual occupation is reasonableness in the moral sense, but that intellectual occupation, even when chosen by way of self-indulgence, is still reasonableness in the moral sense. Of course the matter is complicated by a substantive connection, the degree of which is matter of opinion, between the two things, like that between being a physician and leading a healthy life. Intellectual exercise and ambition have a definite influence on certain capacities concerned in the reasonable will. But it cannot be made out, that a tendency to the more intellectual occupations is in itself a tendency to moral reasonableness. Moral reasonableness must be a general characteristic of moral action, not guaranteed by the special content of any form of activity.

Next I have to discuss a principle which is advocated as an expression of the morally reasonable, on the ground of having a sort of analogy to several maxims or axioms of the intellectual world. It used to be said that justice is like a square ; or that the

rightness of an action consists in its conformity to certain eternal proportions impressed upon the world by God. I take one more modern form of these principles as a type of them all. Bentham said, "One is only to count for one," and it is a mere amplification of this when Mr. Sidgwick maintains, if I understand him, that it is objectively reasonable not to prefer my own interest or pleasure simply because it is my own, to that of some one else. This principle seems to me a commendable expression of moral judgment, and I do not think that it is needless or empty. There is a famous passage in *Middlemarch* where the heroine, in a matter which acutely touches her own feelings, thinks to herself, "Now how should I act if I could compel my own pain to be silent, and merely consider what is best for the lives of all the persons concerned in the situation?" That I suppose is a concrete rendering of what this principle means.

But if we look closer, we see its weak side. It is negative, and consequently abstract. You are not to heed your own feelings unless they are such that you would heed them if they were some one's else in the same circumstances. This amounts to no more than saying, "We believe there is always, under all circumstances, a right course." It is strictly parallel to the theoretical principles of Uniformity or Causation. "We believe that there is an explanation for everything; that nothing changes without some reason." These are useful maxims if they make us look for the explanation, and so the other is a useful maxim, if it makes us look for the right course. But it really falls between two stools. It is not capable, as intellectual theorems are, of accurate development and application by measurement and analysis. Yet on the other hand it makes no special appeal to any special content, or tendency of reasonableness embodied in definite ends. It is neither theoretically fertile, nor is it a description of a practical influence.

It is a well-known phenomenon that those who suggest maxims or moral axioms of this kind as defining moral reasonableness are apt to be reduced to assuming a particular impulse, told off to assist or obey the reason. Such are Plato's "Spirited" element in the soul, Kant's reverence, Mr. Sidgwick's general desire to do what is

reasonable. This seems to me to be creating a rule which has no positive content, and therefore has not the character of a human purpose, and then imagining an impulse to obey it the nature of which is not accounted for in reference to any plan of life, but must simply be propounded as an isolated fact.

It kept suggesting itself to us above that reasonableness could not be thoroughly explained on the basis of a distinction between means and end, because actual ends are not simple and uniform, but are obviously qualified by the so-called means, or context of circumstance. We agreed, however, that what is reasonable must be so in virtue of a positive content, whether as means or perhaps as end, and that its negative or prohibitive aspect must arise from the conflict of two such positive contents.

We have in this section looked at two interpretations of moral reasonableness apparently suggested by analogies with intellectual reasonings or principles, and we could not deny that each of them had a certain appearance of truth, but one seemed to confuse the content with the form, the other to consist of a form without any content.

3. It suggests itself therefore that moral reasonableness must be a characteristic which we ascribe to purposes of action. Then we get a variety of positive content, without relying on the distinction between means and end; while the abstract principles which we feel to be reasonable fall into their right place as very general descriptions of a purpose or scheme of life which can be called reasonable.

But the idea of a reasonable purpose requires explanation.

First, it is irreconcilable with abstract Hedonism. You cannot have any relations within a single and uniform purpose, and reason always involves relations.

Secondly, it is not the most intellectual purpose, the purpose that has most to do with reasoning. I have tried to explain this above.

Thirdly, it *is* such a life or purpose as possesses a self-consistent relation of the parts to the whole. This is the general characteristic of any reasonable totality *qua* reasonable, and it is this which

forms the general characteristic of reasonable purpose *qua* reasonable.

Then what is the meaning of the self-consistent relation of parts to the whole in the case of a human scheme of life?

We cannot demand that our specific purposes should be related consciously to the purpose of the universe ; because the universe as a whole is the object of theoretical knowledge only, and this does not furnish us with the idea of a concrete purpose at all. It seems then that the whole, by consistency with which human purpose is or is not reasonable, must be the whole of existing human purpose, taken of course as moving in a certain direction, owing to the modification continually introduced through the progressive realisation of purposes. I do not see that more than this can be said without entering upon the analysis of the actual structure of the moral world, of society and of history. What is important seems to me to be that we cannot construct the reasonable world of morality from a theoretical view of men in general and of nature. We have to take it as it is, and are then perhaps able to show that it is an organised movement in the direction of self-consistency of purpose.

Is there not more than one kind or type of self-consistency possible, as when self-indulgence is restricted simply within the bounds of health and decency ? This is the question whether consistency demands completeness, i. e. whether mere omission destroys consistency. It has often been discussed, and I suppose the general answer is that *assuming the unity of the total moral movement*, any elements omitted in any portion of the movement must ultimately have their revenge by producing disturbance.

Then if we ask what after all is the relation of the theoretical reason to the reasonable will or moral reason, the only answer seems to be that the moral reason, in the individual or in the race, is the body of intellectual ideas which are in fact predominant as purposes in either, having become predominant by the power they have shown of crushing out or adjusting to themselves the active associations of all other ideas. And the power is what might be described as logical power ; that is to say it depends on the range

and depth which enables one idea to include in itself as in a system a great variety of minor purposes.

The intellect as such is for morality in the first instance simply the medium in which the moral world or content of the moral world exists ; and which therefore conveys to that content its own peculiar character of system and totality. Then, further, in theoretical reflection on the moral world, I imagine that we notice this predominance of ideas which have organising power, and we frame to express this predominance such predicates as important, right, good. And the whole of these judgments we must call wisdom as opposed to knowledge. But I cannot myself see how these or any judgments can be judgments of the moral reason. They seem to me to be, as judgments, necessarily judgments of the theoretic reason dealing with the facts of the moral world. But then there is the further complication that these judgments themselves, forming the content of intellectual ideas, may, if they have organising power, become actively predominant, and then again they will form a portion of the actual moral world as general ideas or clues, inciting to the active search for concrete ideas which are concordant with them. In this case they are not acting *as* judgments, which are true and false, but only as dominant contents. It is one thing to judge that there is a right in the moral world, and another thing to be mastered by the right in one's own mind.

If I am asked, what I mean by the predominance of dominant ideas, which I allege to form the content of the reasonable will, I start from the position that every idea would produce action if unchecked, simply by suggestions which through associative reproductions call up the necessary movement. Desire may, I believe, or may not intervene, as a state of tension between a pain of want and a pleasure produced by an idea. All that is essential, it appears to me, is this idea which can suggest an action.

In the formed life of a civilised man the organising ideas have long asserted their predominant power, and in every moment crush out countless intruders each of which has in itself suggestions quite capable of leading to action. In childhood or insanity the yielding to every suggestion is a mark of what is called absence or loss of

will ; that is, not the loss of a *general* power to check minor suggestions, but of perfectly *definite* habitual purposes which check them as a matter of course.

This view sounds no doubt like an iron Determinism, and I am not much concerned to defend it from that imputation. After all, if we are determined by the content of our own minds, why then I suppose we determine ourselves. And trivial examples of indifferent alternatives such as "I can blow out this candle or not as I please" seem to me very poor representatives of the moral will, compared with the necessary pressure of an over-mastering idea which drives the man up to the point of saying, "This is what must be decisive with one like me, and I have no alternative." We feel, as we say, that "we shall have to do it." Almost all really serious action, it seems to me, is of this type. And if I have read at all correctly this lesson of the new psychology which owes its origin largely to Herbart, it is an instructive meeting of extremes, that the most analytic of psychologies should more than ever represent the individual as the incarnation of a progressive order in ideas.

B. BOSANQUET.